



# FEDERATION OF FLY FISHERS

*Conserving — Restoring — Educating Through Fly Fishing*

## Northern California Council

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May 29, 1999

Mr. Lester A. Snow  
Executive Director  
CalFed Bay-Delta Program  
1416 - 9th Street, Suite 1155  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Comments, Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan

Dear Mr. Snow:

This is to thank you for the changes we understand are now in place in the steelhead population goal of CalFed's pending draft Ecosystem Restoration plan. We support a Central Valley restoration goal of 40,000 naturally spawned native steelhead. We would also like to compliment you and your staff for the sensitivity being displayed in working with interested parties to the Upper Yuba River anadromous fishery restoration investigation. At the same time, our position is clearly in favor of such actions as may be necessary to restore self-sustaining native steelhead and salmon runs to the Yuba River above Englebright dam.

Terry Mills of your staff did an excellent job of providing an overview of CalFed last Thursday night at Granite Bay. He responded in detail to questions asked concerning current Yuba River discussions. Terry outlined CalFed's efforts toward getting the parties to deal with facts rather than emotions. We appreciate the delicacy needed in dealing with this matter. The concept of fully engaging the various parties in "ground floor" scoping sessions is commendable. Execution to date appears to be as flawless as might be expected of a process which is basically messy. We are impressed!

An important step in the CalFed process is to preserve the option of restoring habitat upstream from existing dams. The tributaries to the Sacramento River, as well as the main stem San Joaquin and its tributaries, are all potential host areas. All are former steelhead and salmon habitat. From genetic studies in other areas we believe the native stocks of rainbow trout above anadromous fish-blocking impoundments may well serve as a base from which to restore native steelhead runs. As such, preserving and enhancing such areas is a worthwhile goal.

For many years NCCFFF has had an active interest in the Yuba River. For the past seven years our associated organization, the California Sport Fishing Protection Alliance (CSPA) has awaited the result of its State Water Resources Control Board challenge over fishery water quality in the lower Yuba River. The higher steelhead restoration numbers should strengthen our position with the Board. As well, CalFed's ability to gain acceptance of steelhead run restoration above



Englebright dam should be enhanced, as long as some advantages accrue to the Sutter-Yuba Counties area along the way.

The current Yuba River engagement may represent an opportunity to insert some long-sought flood control protection works into the fishery restoration equation. After initial phases of the current exploratory discussions, it may be appropriate to insert some local benefits into the discussions. There is clear precedence in such an action, as is evidenced by the recreational reservoirs constructed in Plumas and Siskiyou counties during the State Water Project years.

After preliminary studies of Englebright Reservoir modifications and Upper Yuba habitat studies are commenced, a study of a federal/state-funded flood control project at the confluence of the Yuba and Feather rivers may be timely. Relief of Marysville, Yuba City, Olivehurst and Linda from flood hazard may ameliorate for passage upstream of Englebright for salmon and steelhead. Expanding river capacity by setting back levees in that area might be feasible. Here is an area where both Department of Water Resources and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers expertise must be sought. There may be other options worthy of consideration, as well.

It will be difficult to achieve 40,000 native steelhead in the San Joaquin-Sacramento Rivers system without being able to restore the upper Yuba as a spawning and rearing area. CalFed faces major challenges in achieving those goals. However, farmers in the San Joaquin Valley, as well as urban dwellers in Southern California, the Bay Area, and valley cities such as Sacramento, are all dependant on positive answers to this puzzle...whether they know it or not.

We look forward to continuing our work with you on these issues.

Sincerely,



Charles P. Bucaria, Sr.  
Director, for the Conservation Committee  
Northern California Council, Federation of Fly Fishers

cc: Richard Izmirian  
Dan McDaniel, President  
Rob Ferroggiaro, Conservation Vice-President  
James Crenshaw, President, CSPA  
Interested Parties